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Summer Management of the Laying Flock

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The successful poultryman has learned from experience that the months of July, August, and September are the most profitable months of the year for producing market eggs. This is accounted for by the upward trend of the egg market without a corresponding increase in the cost of production.

It is well known, however, that unless the flock is properly housed, fed, and managed the production begins to decrease rapidly in June. The following suggestions are given with a view to keeping up production, the main consideration in summer management of poultry.

VENTILATING THE HOUSE

The poultry house should be the coolest building on the farm. This is possible only when an abundance of ventilation is provided. All windows, including muslin windows, should be removed from the front of the house not later than June. There should be an opening in both sides of the house—a 1-sash, 6-light 8 by 10-inch glass makes a very desirable window for the sides. These windows should also be removed before hot weather.

At the back of the house, a 1-sash window should be placed every 10 feet under the dropping boards. These windows should be hinged at the top, and during the summer fastened up to the underside of the dropping boards. There should also be a 12-inch opening just under the eaves, extending the entire length of the house, to insure cross ventilation. When winter comes, this opening can be closed tight enough to prevent a draft, and it is so essential for summer ventilation that every house should be provided with such an opening.

EXTERNAL PARASITES

Unless the house is free from mites and the hens free from lice it will be hard to keep up summer production. Mites can be eradicated by painting the roosts and roosting quarters with crude oil or the waste oil from the automobile or tractor crank case. The essential requirement in eradicating mites is to be thoro in applying the oil. Care should be taken to see that every crack and crevice in the roosts, dropping boards, and rear wall of the house is reached. The amount of oil required may vary with conditions, but it is essential that

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enough be applied to insure some remaining on the surface. Oil is sure death to mites, but only when they come in contact with it. Two applications of the oil a week apart will, in most cases, rid the house of mites.

Body lice can be eradicated by applying blue ointment to the skin just below the vent. A portion about the size of a kernel of corn is the proper amount to use for each bird. During nice weather the hens may be dipped in a solution of sodium fluoride and water—one ounce of sodium fluoride to each gallon of water used. If every hen and rooster on the farm is treated with one of the above preparations there need be no concern about lice for at least six months. Blue ointment and sodium fluoride can be secured at most drug stores.

HOW TO CONTROL BROODY HENS

Broody hens do not lay eggs, and consequently decrease the income from the poultry flock. Any practical method that will decrease either the number of broody hens in the flock or the length of time necessary to break up broodiness, will increase the egg production. It is a good practice to mark a hen when she goes broody, and if it is observed that she goes broody often the best thing to do is to sell or eat her. Broodiness is an inherited character which can be largely eliminated by breeding from hens that do not go broody. When this is practiced for a number of years the number of broody hens can be materially decreased.

The length of time a hen is broody depends upon: (1) The breed; (2) the feed during the broody period; (3) the broody coop; (4) the length of time the hen has been on the nest before being put in the broody coop.

Broodiness in Its Relation to Breed.—At the Vineland Egg-laying Contest it was shown that 75 percent of the Rhode Island Reds developed broodiness, 70 percent of the Wyandottes, 66 percent of the Plymouth Rocks, and only 11 percent of the Leghorns. This small percentage of broodiness in Leghorns is largely due to selection and breeding. From the same source we learn that the average number of days lost per broody hen was 29.6 for the Wyandottes, 25.7 for the Rhode Island Reds, 24.2 for the Rocks, and 11.8 for the Leghorns. This difference is largely due to the fact that the heavier breeds were broody more often than the Leghorns.

Ration for the Broody Hen.—The most important factor in control of broodiness is the feed during the broody period. It was once believed that the hen should be starved while broody. This theory was not based on facts, as starvation increases the brood tendency. The birds should be well fed, and in fact every means should be used to force the food consumption. This can be done by feeding the same ration and using the same methods of feeding as recommended for the laying flock. (See page 3.) Water and green feed should be supplied—water especially should be before the broody hen at all times.

The Broody Coop.—Broody hens should be transferred to a wire or slat bottomed coop as soon as they go broody. The slat or wire bottom prevents the hens from getting a warm nest, and unless they can sit in on a warm nest they soon go back to laying. The broody coop should be located in a cool, shady place, preferably outside the hen house.

If the hens are removed from the nest at once, confined to a broody coop, and fed as described above, the broody period should not last more than four or five days.

SUMMER FEEDING

The most important limiting factor in summer egg production on most farms in Ohio is a deficiency in both the quality and quantity of feed. The following rations are recommended as meeting the requirements for summer feeding.

OHIO STATE RATIONS

No. 1

Scratch	*Mash*
200 lbs. shelled or cracked corn	100 lbs. cornmeal
100 lbs. wheat or heavy oats	100 lbs. ground oats
	100 lbs. wheat middlings
	100 lbs. wheat bran
	100 lbs. meat scraps

If it is impossible to secure the oats for the mash, substitute middlings or cornmeal. More wheat than given in the above scratch may be profitably fed when the price of wheat is near the price of corn.

No. 2

Scratch	*Mash*
100 lbs. shelled or cracked corn	200 lbs. cornmeal
100 lbs. wheat	100 lbs. ground oats
100 lbs. oats	100 lbs. ground wheat
	100 lbs. meat scraps

Tankage may be used instead of meat scraps if a good grade is available. Much of the tankage now on the market is of low grade and of low protein content, however, and we question the advisability of using it in the ration. Many losses have been reported in recent months due to feeding tankage made by local companies.

Feed all the milk the hens will consume, or all that is available. It is not advisable to reduce the meat scraps in the mash even tho an unlimited amount of milk is fed. Hens must have water during hot weather, and they cannot consume enough milk in conjunction with the water to supply the protein needed for maximum egg production.

METHOD OF FEEDING

Grain Feed.—The grain should be fed sparingly in the morning. In most farm flocks on range it may be advisable to eliminate the morning grain feed entirely after June to force the mash consumption. All the grain the hens will clean up should be given at night.

Mash Feed.—The mash should be fed in boxes or hoppers. The accompanying cut gives a plan for a very cheap and practical mash box.

In order to force mash consumption the following practices are recommended:

1. Feed little or no scratch feed in the morning.
2. Keep a dry mash before the hens at all times. Place the mash boxes toward the front of the house to insure good light. Hens consume more mash when they can see what they are eating.
3. Have plenty of eating space at the dry mash boxes. Two inches per hen is recommended.
4. If the hens get grain at the barn or feed yards, keep them shut up until noon to force mash consumption.

5. Keep the hen house cool so the hens will go to the mash boxes to eat. Remove all windows and open a back ventilator, 12 inches in width, just under the eaves the entire length of the house. Cross ventilation is essential.

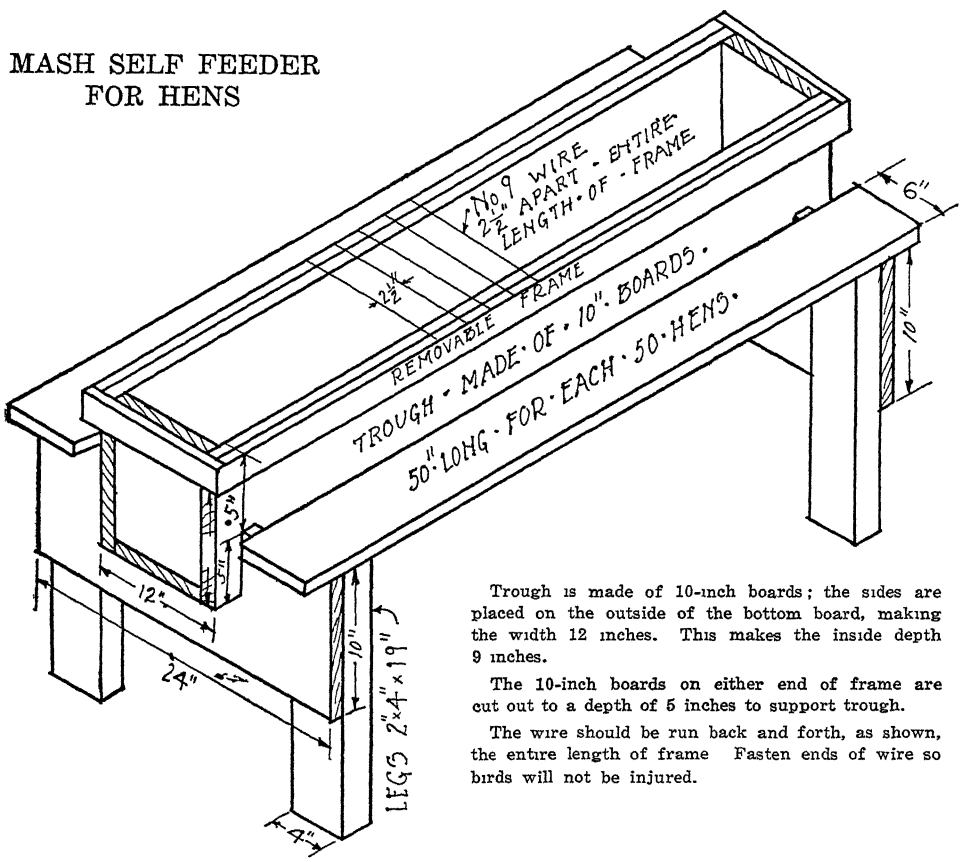
WATER, OYSTER SHELL, AND GRIT

Water.—This is one of the most essential parts of the poultry ration, and during hot weather should be kept before the hens all the time. A hen consumes over 100 pounds of water in a year. One dozen eggs contain about one pint of water.

Oyster Shell.—The shell of an egg must come from the material the hen eats. Oyster shell is recommended for this part of the feed. It should be kept before the hens at all times.

Grit.—Grit is the hens' teeth. It should be hard and insoluble. Oyster shell will not take the place of grit; both are essential and inexpensive, and should be before the hens at all times.

MASH SELF FEEDER FOR HENS



Trough is made of 10-inch boards; the sides are placed on the outside of the bottom board, making the width 12 inches. This makes the inside depth 9 inches.

The 10-inch boards on either end of frame are cut out to a depth of 5 inches to support trough.

The wire should be run back and forth, as shown, the entire length of frame Fasten ends of wire so birds will not be injured.

A free poultry correspondence course is offered to all residents of Ohio. Write for particulars to J. E. McClintock, Department of Publications, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.